



The Elder Justice Act, signed into law in 2010, is designed to provide federal resources to prevent; detect; treat; understand; intervene in; and, where appropriate, prosecute elder abuse, neglect and exploitation. For a bulleted summary of the act, please scan the QR code with your smart phone or go to <http://www.apa.org/about/gr/issues/aging/elder-justice-facts.aspx> ■

The unit also works cases for any vulnerable adult, such as individuals being victimized because of a mental or physical condition.

NO SAFETY AT HOME

Many seniors suffer abuse at the hands of loved ones in their own home, Thornsberry said.

Thornsberry worked a case where a woman in her early 60s had a condition where her legs locked up. Her husband was her caretaker. One day the fire department was called to their house and had to forcibly enter into the home and into her bedroom. They found the completely bedridden woman locked in her bedroom — starving and laying in her own waste. Her husband hadn't taken care of her for a week.

"In this case it was criminal because he was the caretaker and he was able to do the job and he wasn't doing it," Thornsberry said. "We do run into situations where people are overwhelmed and don't know what they are doing, and we get them help. But when we get these neglect cases, they are disturbing, very disturbing."

"Whoever is entrusted to take care of that person, whether it is a person or institution, they have a right to make sure they maintain the health and welfare of them," Henderson said. "They need their medicines. They need to be cared for. They need treatment. If they neglect to do that, then the entity, the institution or individual, can be prosecuted for neglect."

Who knows what makes people neglect or abuse those they are supposed to love and for whose care they have been made responsible. But, Henderson pointed out the possible connection between prior abuse, and how it affects the caretaker's relationship with the victim.

"One day I'd like to do a study on caregivers — if you're the victim of abuse from your family — your mom or dad — then

somewhere down the line you become a caregiver, how effective can you be as the caregiver when you're caring for the abuser?" Henderson asked. "Because that happens. If they are entrusted as caregiver and they have been the abused, how do they care for them, or is this their time to get even?"

"I wonder if the caregivers that are abusing now, if you look back, were they abused?" she continued. "I wish there was a way to document that stuff. Maybe that's why there is a neglect or an abuse issue, because they were abused by them."

Louisville Detective John Fogel encountered a woman who was caring for her husband. He had bed sores so bad it looked like he had been attacked by a shark, Fogel said. The man had been lying in the same position so long, his skin had started to die and manifested itself into a giant sore that began eating its way out. When Fogel interviewed him, he was still alive, but in the small of his back he had a six-inch area >>



► Louisville Metro Police Detective John Fogel has served in the department's Crimes Against Seniors Unit for five years.

PHOTO BY JIM ROBERTSON